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the hands of builders, as they are mostly very difficult things to bring into the general scheme of a room.

The important questions of carpeting and curtaining must not be overlooked. A favorite plan, where parquetry is too expensive, is to cover the floor all over with India matting, or plain colored felting, and afterward spread foreign rugs and mats about here and there. This lacks unity, though there is a refreshing coolness about the look of the matting, especially in hot weather. There can, however, be no possible objection to bordering the room with white or colored matting, and laying down a centre carpet. It has a bright and clean appearance, and musical sounds strike clearer and sharper than in a room carpeted all over.

Gaudy, bright-hued carpets are a complete mistake, as are also large, geometric, or spotty patterns. Remember, always, a carpet is a background to all the colors that will be seen against it, and take care that it is subdued in tone, and that the colors are well blended, as by this means they will counteract any too positive predominant hue.

A room is incomplete without curtains; there is always an unfinished look until the hard outline of the windows is broken by the soft folds of drapery, which catch the full force of the light from outside, and disperse it in modified form over the room.

Besides their use in subduing the glare of light, there is, of course, their practical aspect in keeping out draughts, and closing in the room at night, which important functions should have been placed first. Curtains depend for artistic effect mainly on three things—color, texture, and aptitude for falling into soft and graceful folds. Hence, silks, cloths, velvets, and serges are all suitable materials. The highly-glazed chintzes of former days, though admirable in many respects, were ludicrously stiff and angular, and one gladly welcomes, in their place, the soft cretonne cloth, with its wonderful variety of pattern and color. Mixed colors and checkered patterns are less necessary in the curtains than in the walls and carpets; and frequently, after an exhaustive search for a well-designed patterned curtain that will suit a room, one is obliged to fall back on some self-colored stuff, and confess that it answers every purpose. There is, however, no binding rule here, nor need you be in the least averse to a figured material so long as it is not spotty, but what is known as an "all-over," or well-covered pattern, and not too violent in contrasted colors.

The Spanish cross striped materials in brilliant reds and yellows are rather the exception than the normal standard for curtains. There is, in the present day, an overwhelming supply of curtain stuffs of every color and texture, many of which do equal credit to the ceaseless activity of brain and loom, so that one need scarcely point to any in particular; and general principles affecting design in wall-papers and carpets will sufficiently indicate the line to observe in approving or rejecting any pattern. Many people confine themselves to muslin or lace curtains for the drawing-room, but, although this is a fairly passable escape from a difficulty, it cannot be considered more than a temporary measure. Lace curtains behind the heavier stuff curtains give a certain dress and finish to a room, but by themselves they are too weak and transparent.

As to valances, the grandiose bullion fringes with wooden pendants, encased in twisted yellow silk, are generally abominable, yet even these, worked in quiet colors harmonizing with the curtains, and kept to some very simple outline, may look exceedingly well, and by no means barbaric. The simpler and more natural a valance is the better. A light brass pole will always answer the purpose as an ornamental curtain-rod. Cornices require valances, and frequently bring the window into excessive prominence, and detach it from the wall in a manner injurious to the general effect.

A word on window-blinds will not be out of place here. The expedients for screening windows seem to be various, and the window-blind of the day is rapidly superseded by the window-blind of to-morrow. And yet the question may be resolved within very narrow limits. The purpose of a blind is to screen the room from outsiders, and to modify and subdue the light. And these points seem best met by the usual white linen blind, or the Venetian blind formed of parallel laths of wood, which turn on their axes, and admit air and light as required. It is strange that the tints of the Venetian blind have been so few, when by painting the laths a certain tone, a refraction of rays might be obtained, of great benefit to the room in which they fall;

instead of which a powerful green is the usual color adopted, which often completely nullifies the tone of the walls and curtains, and shuts out the light no more effectually than a paler tint would do, seeing that the laths themselves are opaque. However, in the absence of Venetian, the white linen blind is the simplest means of softening the light. All colored blinds, as usually made, are too strong, and overlie everything with their own reflection.

Where low half-blinds are required to windows overlooked from the road, the English wicker-work, plain or gilded, is as inoffensive as anything. All wire or gauze blinds are dismally ugly, and ground glass is office-like and monotonous. A fashion obtains abroad of employing stained glass, set in small cross-bar frames of lead, gilded. The pattern is often a simple rosette and flower alternated, and the effect is good both inside the room and from the street.

And now let the reader take a rapid survey of the drawing-room here theoretically furnished. The door is flung open, and he crosses the cool Chinese matting, and steps upon the velvety pile or Persian carpet. Progress is easily made across the room, or by a circuitous path, skirting divans, easy chairs, and small tables. He sits comfortably on one of the aforesaid lounges, and glances round. The walls, mirrors, seats, and pictures seem to form one continuous, harmonious, though varied, panorama of pleasing forms and colors, mingling and contrasting. The pieces of furniture are not instantly received on the retina of the eye as so many inky blotches on a white wall; but slowly, and as the eye becomes accustomed to the room, one by one the different points come out, and by degrees their various forms and component parts are unfolded. Bits of color, unobserved at first, starlike appear. The curtains also fall into the scheme of the decoration, and merge their individuality for the good of the room.

#### A PAPER HOUSE AND PAPER FURNITURE.

ON a recent visit to the factory of Messrs. William Gibson's Sons, we were surprised to notice a great variety of objects for house-decoration and furniture made from papier-maché. Passing some remarkable paper counterfeits of old armor and obsolete weapons of war, and full-size models of classical antiquities, we came upon a wooden book-case with brown paper mouldings and figures in relief in imitation of carving. Then there was a mock marble mantel-piece and a huge cabinet and accessories, all looking very solid and forming apparently the entire side of a room. When Mr. Gibson, however, proceeded, without great effort, to lift the whole thing, it appeared that all was made of paper, and it was explained that it was for use behind the curtain of the Madison Square Theatre. The stage, certainly, would seem to be the only proper place for paper furniture. At a distance it looks very natural, and it is very easily moved, which is an important consideration behind the scenes. We were informed, however, of a new and more practical use for papier-maché, and that was for ceilings, in place of plaster. Mr. Gibson explained that it does away with the need of lath and plaster, it costs no more, and, being very light, there is no danger of its falling, as plaster often does, by its own weight. Recently part of the ceiling of the old Huguenot church in Charleston fell, and he has satisfactorily repaired the damage by supplying papier-maché in place of the plaster. The papier-maché is moulded to look like the latter, and Mr. Gibson says no one, by simply looking at the ceiling, could distinguish the difference.

According to an English newspaper, the application of paper has been carried to a far greater extent at the Sydney Exhibition. A house in it has been built of, and furnished with, that material. The exterior is moulded in carton-pierre, while the interior is covered with the same material, being plain on the floor, forming splendid arabesques on the walls, and moulded in imitation of plaster on the ceilings. The doors, cupboards, and shelves are of the same material, while the entire furniture, including chandeliers and a stove, in which a fire can be lighted, is made of papier-maché. The carpets and curtains are of paper, and there is a bedroom in which there is not only a large bed made of papier-maché, but there are also blankets, sheets, quilts, and female underclothing, dresses and bonnets, in the latest style, composed solely of carton-pâte. It is proposed to give a series of banquets in this building, in

which the plates, dishes, knives, forks, and glasses will all be of paper. All this is far ahead of the Gibsons. They must look to their laurels.

#### BOW-LEGGED FURNITURE.

THE stupid practice of cutting wood across the grain in the manufacture of legs, chairs, tables, and sofas, which one might have hoped was obsolete, but which has come into fashion again, calls forth the following remarks from *The London Furniture Gazette*:

"If wood is cut with the grain it is comparatively strong, and if against the grain it is comparatively weak, and a piece of wood which would be, if cut with the grain, sufficiently strong for the leg of a useful chair, would prove altogether useless as a chair leg if cut across the grain; indeed, with many woods the leg would have to be four times the thickness if cut across the grain that would be required were it cut in the direction of the 'vessels' of the tree-stem. In order, then, that we may use the wood in the simplest, best, and most economical manner, it is necessary that we cut it in the direction of the grain, and use it as far as possible in straight pieces. Yet how frequently do we find chairs with bowed legs—legs cut against the grain! Such legs have grown in favor recently, since abortions of this character were general in the days of Queen Anne, and this Queen Anne revival has brought them again into use. Man is a creature endowed with reason, and it is *reason* that makes him nobler than the brute; yet he constantly acts as though he possessed no powers by which he can discriminate between right and wrong. Reason at once tells us that it is absurd to waste wood, and that it is stupid not to use it in such a manner as will give to our seats strength and durability, especially when this happens to be the cheapest method of making the material, and when no beauty is gained by any departure from what is obviously right. Yet, in direct opposition to the dictates of reason, we copy ugly chairs from a bygone age, which are formed in a manner that we know to be wrong."

The subject is one which we have often touched upon, but so long as it continues fashionable—hateful word!—to have these bow-legged monstrosities, there is no reason to hope that any remonstrance from the press will avail in the matter. Quite recently a prominent New York dealer in "antique furniture" pointed out to us with pride a set of body-bulged and bow-legged mahogany from an old house on the Hudson, and deliberately avowed his intention of perpetrating several replicas of it with smart new brass fittings, which we do not doubt he will readily dispose of at fancy prices. What a conscience a man must have who will in cold blood proceed to resuscitate a lie in wood which has been dead more than a hundred years!

#### CARPET DYES.

THROUGH a curious misapprehension, the impression got abroad last spring that arsenic was used in the coloring of Kidderminster carpets, and the Foreign Secretary of the Swedish Government wrote to some English carpet manufacturers that any textile fabrics introduced into Sweden containing arsenic would, on detection, be liable to condemnation. The *Warehousemen's and Drapers' Trade Journal* emphatically denies that British carpets contain arsenical dye, and in order that the public may be sure of this, it briefly states what dyes and chemicals are used in the trade. Blacks, so much in favor of late years, are produced with logwood in some form or other. Browns with cudbear, which is orchella weed, found on the sea-shore, ground up. Yellows are made with chipped fustic, which is a wood grown in South America; also with flavine. Reds are made with cochineal, which, as everybody knows, is an insect. Blues, with indigo or aniline dye, made from tar. White is simply the natural color of the worsted bleached. Among the other commodities used are bichrome, tartar, madder (a root), ammonia, sulphate of soda, oxalic acid, alum, roll sulphur, turmeric, and gambier, and there is not one of these substances that, when dyed into worsted, is in any way dangerous to human life. Where arsenic is employed as a coloring agent, it is generally used for greens or whites, but this does not apply to carpets, as the greens are produced with fustic and indigo, and the white, as stated above, is simply the natural color of the fabric.